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By-Cottrell, Edward B.

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This report gives guidelines for the organization of institutional research in the community junior college. They include the use of an overall systems approach to data needs and handling: the need for adequate financing: the need for faculty and administrative participation in planning, design, and conduct of research projects: and the coordination of research under a full-time director. (JC)

A PROGRAM OF EFFECTIVE RESEARCH FOR THE COMMUNITY JUNIOR COLLEGE

Edward B. Cottrell - 1969

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Introduction

Research in the community junior college today rarely exceeds the descriptive level, occasionally utilizes predictive techniques, and almost never approaches controlled, manipulative experimental levels.

Reports by Johnson (1), Sprague (2), Brumbaugh (3), Stickler (4), and others generally point out the paucity of institutional (self-study) types of studies and that the preponderance of existing studies is in areas of descriptions of students, test score distributions, curriculum (survey of literature) studies. Very few of the studies aim at program and curriculum evaluation, instructional evaluation and long-range planning, system-wide.

Junior colleges are generally thought of as institutions totally committed to quality instruction, to an effective guidance and counseling service, to an "open door" admissions policy, and to multiple- (transfer, vocational-technical, community service and adult education) purpose programs.

How much more complex are the information needs of the planners and decision-makers of such colleges as these than are the information needs of a single-purpose, liberal-arts college which prepares its students to transfer to upper divisions of other colleges and universities!

Community junior college people need to know if their curricula are planned to meet community and student educational and training needs. They need to know the kinds of students with which they have to work, the kinds of counseling which are needed and effective, the instructional methods and materials which are most effective, unit costs of various programs, the utilization of facilities and equipment, and so on.

If such evaluations as these are not or have not been made, then one cannot be certain the college's commitment to quality education is really being met!

An effective, comprehensive institutional research and information program can help to answer questions about programs, methods, facilities, faculty, students, etcetera.

GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZATION OF IR

1. The research program should be centrally organized and administered. Direction, coordination and review of IR should be centered under one full-time (if possible) director or coordinator.

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2. IR must be planned. Institution-wide problem areas must be identified, concise problems stated, priorities set, and activities of the research program calendared.

3. The IR officer should report to the president or vice-president/dean of administration.

4. An institution-wide IR advisory committee should be set up to propose studies, react to proposed studies of the director et al, help set priorities, and serve to enlist faculty understanding and support for IR projects.

5. Faculty and administration should serve on this IR committee as "equals", and they should participate in planning, design and conduct of IR projects.

6. IR must be adequately financed--a recommended amount, according to recognized leaders in junior college research, being 2 to 3 percent of the college budget, or a minimum of $10,000 to $25,000 for a small college on a yearly basis.

7. The IR office should contain the Central Research File, where all studies done in the college are filed and indexed. It should also serve as the central point for referral, by all college personnel, of all requests for participation in research projects from within and without the college (of course, regular reports filed with the State Department of Education, Division of Community Junior Colleges in financial, enrollment, etc., areas are excepted).

8. IR should be deeply involved in all planning areas (finance, students, faculty, buildings and facilities; educational programs, etcetera). Effective enrollment project tools need to be developed which will accurately predict enrollments a year in advance and present realistic projections for a ten-year period into the future. These ten-year projections should be revised yearly and brought in line with new and/or changed factors and rates.

   Enrollment projections make feasible the long-range planning of facilities, faculty, financial needs, etcetera.

9. An overall "systems" approach to data needs and data handling in the junior college should be conducted as soon as possible. Data flow into, among and out of college offices and classrooms needs to be analyzed and programmed efficiently.

   Plans should be made to begin design and implementation of a total "data bank" system, which can be automated in steps or phases as data processing equipment becomes available, beginning with basic unit record equipment for punched cards, to some computer time, to the largest, solid-state computers with all the "extras" such as tape drives, disk pack drives (RAMAC), multi-processing time-sharing, modular capabilities, optical-scan mark sensing, high speed printers, tele-processing remote access, etcetera.

If these steps are considerately taken, IR will have an opportunity to answer questions your faculty, board of trustees, administration,--and yes even your students--might have in order to feel they are in a truly effective institution of higher learning.

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